

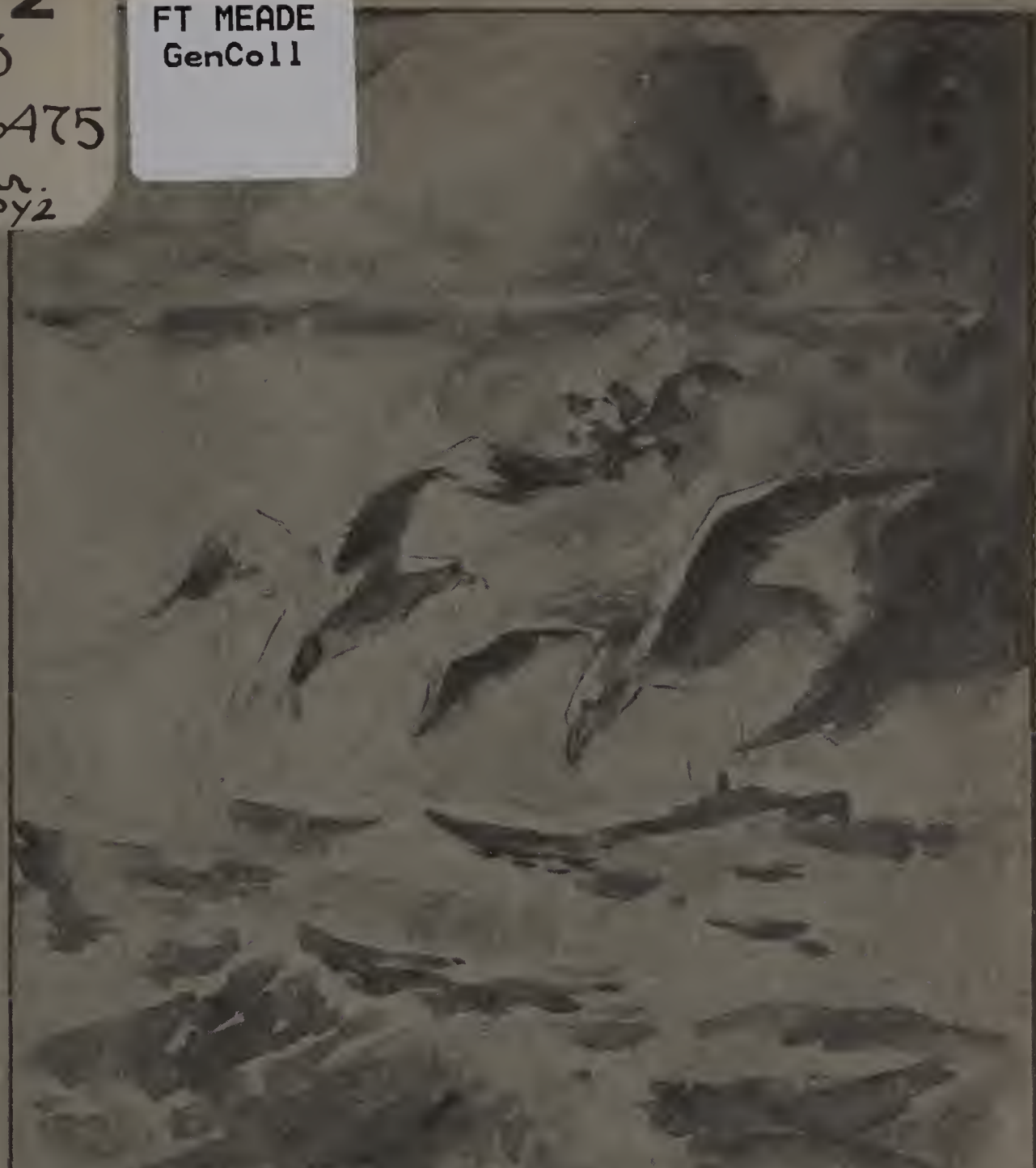
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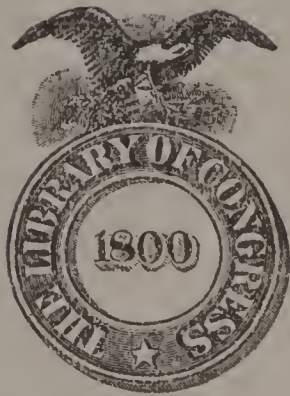
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# GRAY GULL FEATHERS

AND OTHER STORIES

GEORGE HOYT SMITH



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GEORGE HOYT SMITH

# GRAY GULL FEATHERS

*By*  
GEORGE HOYT SMITH

COLUMBIA, S. C.  
THE STATE COMPANY  
1924

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## GRAY GULL FEATHERS

“The Captain,” they called him at Gilreath’s, where I usually stopped somewhere about 1:30 for my first meal of the day. You see I was one of the night workers so often told about but not much seen—a newspaper man with hours that reversed the usual schedules and my breakfast and lunch were taken together, and most always at Gilreath’s restaurant—a place well known for its excellent food and reasonable prices in Jacksonville—and the Captain was well-named, I thought, because he had a nautical roll as well as other kinds during service behind the counter where the hurry-ups and keep-your-hats-on liked to sit on high stools and order roast beef and potatoes and pie. Fatty wouldn’t have been a bad name for the new man, however, for he was a close fit behind the counter, and his round face and good-natured smile assured one of a sympathetic choice in viands if the stewards and cooks would let him pick. The Captain was handy, despite his weight, and polite, attentive and interested. I understood from the manager that he had

been engaged for the rush that was on with the races. Jacksonville was full of people to the rim during the racing meets of the early "teens of the 19 hundreds," and every restaurant engaged additional help and glad to get it. When the races were over the big, fat fellow, with the weatherbeaten face and a suggestion of the sea in his blue eyes, was kept on. A lot of the extra help followed the ponies, to Pimlico or Montreal or where. In the rush days I hadn't noticed the Captain very particularly, but one day when he brought my soup and laid knife and fork and spoon alongside and busied himself with something near-by I was attracted to give him a look over by what seemed to have been an involuntary sigh.

As I turned he recovered his usual smile and seemed as though anxious to appear happy and interested in his work. It was then that I began to wonder in a half-conscious way, "what about him." There was something more than a look for a stray dime or nickel—the lunch counter tip—in his face. Covertly I studied him: An Englishman, not of the Cockney type; good features; too fat, admittedly, and the marks of a careless, although not necessarily care-free,

life plainly visible. When he had sighed there was a look on his face that was indescribable. Apprehensive and helpless. Not the set expression of the haunted; but a shadow that for an instant suggested blotted out hope, and then was gone.

“Been in this country long?” I ventured one day as the Captain brought me the mustard and looked on with apparent approval as I liberally seasoned my roast beef.

“Several years, yes; Doctor,” he answered. “Several consecutive years—excusing a cruise or two along the coast. Came to Jacksonville last fall and stopped ashore.”

No reason on earth had he for calling me Doctor other than the possible notion that such a title would please me. He may or may not have known, from the other waiters, that I worked at a desk in the newspaper office nearby—but I let it go at that and thought to ask another question. It was not to be, for his attention was demanded elsewhere, and when I picked up my check a little later the Captain was supplying fried trout, watermelon and lemon pie to three South Florida visitors in

town for the day and chatting with them quite cheerfully.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was Saturday, I remember, when I asked the Captain the first personal question—and when leaving the office a little before midnight somehow it came back to me—that haunted look on the waiter's face and the sigh that escaped him, evidently to his discomfiture. I had not gone far, in fact was crossing Hemming Park, when someone greeted me from a bench near the monument.

“How are you, Doctor,” said the man in the shadow—the voice I recognized as the Captain's—“Beautiful night, isn't it?”

“Fine!” I said, answering both questions with one word. Then, remarking the long hours of restaurant waiters, I expressed wonder that he was not asleep at that hour.

“I can't sleep, Doctor,” he said; and that look I had caught in the restaurant flashed by. “No use; I can't sleep,” he repeated, now almost in a whisper. “Might just as well come out and sit in the moonlight.”

He seemed surprised when I sat down on the bench, and first declined and then accepted a



cigar I offered. He was not the quick lunch hustler here and it took a minute for him to understand that I was not giving him a tip.

"Did you ever hear voices," he began, almost as soon as the cigar was lit. He was looking at the match that had gone out and was almost as one talking to himself or in his sleep. "Voices," he added, "not to you—but about you?"

"No," I said; "not that I recall. But maybe it's the heat or overwork."

"Not that, Doctor. O, I've tried all kinds of things to make me sleep; but it's no use." He was looking thousands of miles away and again whispered: "I hear their voices! They've found me again and give me no peace!"

I looked sharply at the Captain as he sat in full light of the moon; looked to see if he could be dreaming; or under the influence of liquor or drugs—but his eyes, serious, and his attitude, as if listening, denied my suspicions.

"Captain," I said; "you talk queerly." Somehow his glance gave me the idea that would come if a person was drowning and a rope was held just out of reach. He wanted help, or sympathy, or something. I thought to go on towards my room; and then changed my mind.

“What is it all about, Captain?” I said, finally, and he could tell that I was interested. “It’s just a friendly interest and not curiosity; I really would like to know what it is you refer to—the voices and all that.”

He moved a little on the bench and shook his head. I could see that he was trying to decide whether to talk further or not. His cigar was out and as I struck a match for him to relight the reserve was burned away.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Not much of a story, Doctor—not anything that sounds right or reasonable,” he said, after a pause that lasted while a sergeant of police rode down the street between us and the Hotel Windsor, now showing but few lights and little signs of life. “Some parts of it sound like a book yarn; I wish I could forget it—but I cannot. You see I was one of those younger sons—the clergy or the army for me—and neither to my taste. What was the use of my sticking around in England? My father was—well, that’s nothing now, and anything I might have been—is in the past. \* \* \* \* \* I got away, a lad—and had all kinds of luck.



“Sometimes I made good at one thing or another; then went the pace that leaves you panting and wondering if it was worth while. The governor had done his best for me before I sailed on my own route and with a fair education and good constitution I wasn’t often hungry.

“The sea called me first and for years I was with one of those steamship lines that carry great cargoes from the Arctic to the equator and back again; tramps, they call them, for they go and come without special routes or schedules and seldom make a port the second time in a dozen years.

“You ask how was I working? Why, as a common sailor at first—deck hand, then galley boy and assistant and afterwards as steward—and it was while steward of the *Lord Biltmore*, a big, five thousand ton hulk in 19— that I fell in with a Spaniard who told me of Ceylon. He was supercargo on that trip and we were bound from New York to Colombo.

“The Spaniard was talking with the captain night after night and I became so interested that it occurred to me that Ceylon would be my stopping place.

“For years I had only been ashore a bit and

then back for a cruise to Lord knows where. You know how those steamers go, Doctor? From New York to Valparaiso and from New Orleans to Sydney or Iquique. The agents make the charters and the captains point the tubs according to orders.

“It had been a fair voyage—that I speak of on the *Lord Biltmore*—and when we were off the Malabar coast in the Arabian sea, pointing close for Colombo, I made up my mind that I’d quit the ship and see what life ashore would be like. I had some money—a matter of four hundred pounds in gold, and telling my captain that I was off for a spell and might not be back for a few days at any rate, left the second steward in charge and went ashore as soon as we had made port.

“I saw the Spaniard—his name was Mendoza, just before going ashore. He had business that kept him around, but he laughed as I went over the side and his look seemed to say ‘There goes a fool to blow his money and he’ll come back when it is spent.’ He had found out that I had some money; I don’t know how.

“Later in the day I saw Mendoza again; this time he was in a little eating place—or maybe

best say, drinking place—an outdoor affair like they have in those tropical places. The Spaniard was seated at a table. He was with a woman.

“My God, Doctor! That woman’s eyes were the most glorious I’ve ever seen! Old sailor that I was, used to all the wiles and past master in worldliness—that woman fascinated me with a single glance.

“It was just coming on to sunset and through the heavy foliage about the place the red and gold lights seemed to be shimmering about her. I sat down at a table near them, but couldn’t take my eyes off the woman.”

The Captain’s cigar was out again and he stopped, closed his eyes and seemed to shiver—although it was very warm.

“Presently Mendoza saw me; I think the woman, facing me, called his attention to the entry of someone and turning around he beckoned me, with his cigarette, to come to their table. I was not slow in responding, for the spell of the woman was on me and as Mendoza greeted me he said ‘La Comtesse Elfreda,’ waving the cigarette towards his companion, ‘Senor Phillipe’ he added, waving to me.

“The woman smiled and my heart seemed about to break through my ribs. ‘The senor is some interested in the tea culture,’ he told her in Spanish—a language which I had studied in England and later had used more or less often in my roving life.

“‘The Senora has a most wonderful tea farm,’ Mendoza said to me, ‘It is not far from here and is most productive—but alas, the Senora is alone—a widow, and may even sell her place and return to Russia where all her people live.’ ”

The Captain paused again—this time seeming to voluntarily shrink down. A rustle of wings as some night bird passed—or perhaps only the camphor tree nearby answering to the light breeze. The moon had been under a passing cloud and shone out again, clear and strong.

“Ugh!” from the Captain. He straightened up again. “Did you hear that?”

I had heard nothing unusual or unnatural and urged him to go on. The postoffice clock struck twelve—and as if aroused by the sound and brought back from somewhere the Captain went on :

“Oh, yes; yes! I was at the arbor in Colombo!



Well; we sat long and talked a great deal. Mendoza was most anxious to buy liquors and cigarettes—and when he left to escort the woman home he promised to meet me later. He soon reappeared and we drank and smoked and talked until near morning.

“I guess I left nothing unsaid that would convince him of my admiration for the woman, and he, saying that she was an old friend—the widow of a Spaniard he had known in Spain, led me to understand that the beautiful one was well pleased with my looks. When we parted it was to meet again at sunset and go to the home of the Senora.

“‘It isn’t money that the Elfreda needs,’ Mendoza told me as we parted that night. ‘What she wants is some one to help her manage the tea farm. Yet it wouldn’t displease her to have some one as an assistant who could put a few hundred pounds into the business for extensions and improvements.’

“This money talk would have opened the eyes of any man who had not been blinded by the beauty of the woman. To me it was a mere detail—just the matter of occupying so much time

before I could again see the glorious creature.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Once more the Captain had lapsed into silence and I did not interrupt his thought; my cigar was out now and I was maybe getting a bit fidgetty, when the Captain began again :

“You landlubbers,” he said, rather queer like, “who see lovely women every day or hour on the streets and in the shops and homes cannot appreciate the feelings of a sailor who hasn’t laid eyes on anything more attractive perhaps than a Malay Belle in a year’s cruise. Naturally I had seen lots of painted beauties in English, French and American ports, but this one seemed different. Don’t ask me how, or why. I don’t know; suppose it was just a case of being hypnotized—I was it.

“Then that next day! Mendoza took me out just a little way from the city—and say, Doctor, if you ever have a chance to see a tea farm don’t miss it. The tea plants grow in long rows, right under huge trees; they are big evergreen bushes six or seven feet high and the blossoms are very like your orange blossoms—very fragrant. And all about the place were flowers and palms and ferns and trees of every kind. It is

very like a flower farm and the odors are almost intoxicating.

“At the lodge, at the entrance to the farm, we found the Senora; and at her suggestion we walked through paths that were often under flower-tree arches. The house, near the center of the farm, seemed a fine one for that section, but we did not enter—I recall noticing that it appeared to be closed up—but attached no importance to this at the time. After strolling a bit we were served with tea and cakes and liquors in a summer house—the Cyngalese servants appeared to be about when called and gone when not wanted. The moon came up while we were there—big and white, changing all the colors in the garden to silver and blue. The hours passed swiftly.

“Mendoza, a little after tea was served, declared that he must go back to the ship, but suggested that I might stop a little longer.

“Sailors are not generally timid; you know that, Doctor, eh? Well, I was simply crazy about that woman and hadn’t tried very hard to keep her from knowing it. The minute Mendoza was out of sight I told her that I wanted to stay ashore; had four hundred pounds, sterling,

and would marry her any minute she indicated.

“She smiled and in the gentlest sort of way begged me not to be so hasty. But I was drunk with wine and beauty. The woman kept me at a distance, but seemed to be yielding. If I attempted to touch her, she would suggest that the servants were still within sight—although I didn’t see them. This couldn’t go on indefinitely and at last, in answer to my appeals, she promised to meet me later—in the summer house—at midnight. There would be no one about, she said.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“In the matter of a few hours I was on my way to the tea farm again, and, having taken great pains to avoid meeting Mendoza, found the way open and went direct to the summer house—I call it that because it was a latticed enclosure with seats. Everything was quiet and the place was as beautiful as a dream under the moon’s broad beams.

“Entering the place I saw the Senora in the shadows and as she came towards me her glorious beauty covered me as completely as the sea closes over a pebble. I stood an instant as though petrified, dumb, and feasted my eyes on



her charms, only half hidden by a loose and flimsy drapery. In another instant I had caught her in my arms and pressed her close to me; my lips found hers, and—well, I guess I was unconscious for a flash. It was like the first long swallow of champagne and my brain was on fire quickly. \* \* \* \* \* Then I began to realize that something was happening!

“A tightness at my throat that I tried to understand—but I was held, it seemed, by something more powerful than the beauty’s slender hands. \* \* \* As my strength gave way to gasping I could feel her slipping from my embrace; and she laughed, softly.\* \* \* It was a laugh such as is heard in hell when an angel falls!

“Fully conscious, although unable to move or make a noise, I heard her say:

“‘Guess it’s all right now, Mendy. He’s about all in. Hurry and get the yellow boys and we’ll be on our way.’

“Mendoza, whom I had not seen, appeared from the shadow; his hands had prevented mine from reaching my neck, which I now knew, somehow, was encircled by a silken cord that was slowly but surely choking me to death.”

\* \* \* \* \*

"That was years and years ago—but, ugh; I can feel that cord now, Doctor. I wake up and feel it, whenever I try to sleep.

"The cord was tight enough to make me helpless and these fiends evidently thought I was done for. It was a strand of white silk that had held the woman's negligee of Pongee and lace. It had been slipped over my head as I embraced her, and Mendoza, from behind, twisted the ends. A twist, slow but effective, he accomplished with a fan-handle.

"In that instant of sensibility I realized that I had been lured into this trap to be killed and robbed. The woman, now busy searching me for gold she knew I had brought, talked in rapid undertone to Mendoza—it was Russian now, perhaps, for I did not understand, although I caught a word that sounded like 'teahaus.' It was the last I knew, for the breath had left me."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Whew!" said the Captain. "It's warm in Florida, isn't it, Doctor?" changing his position and apparently studying the big hotel with special interest—although there was nothing evident to call for new attention. He hesitated. "Maybe you don't want any more of this yarn.

You see I'm here and—and perhaps the details don't matter, eh? Probably you'd like to get home?"

"Home nothing," I said. "Haven't got any home—and if I had I wouldn't sleep until I knew the rest of the story—"

"So; so;" he said. "Well; I can't sleep anyway. No, I just doze off and then those voices! \* \* \* Well, I'll spin it closer, if you like. Where was I? Oh, yes; I'd just caved in under that she-devil's garote.

"Next thing I knew my arms and legs were striking out—the pressure relieved, my mouth opened and was filled with cold water—to be quickly ejected. It was dark, and finding the water shallow I stood up. Near my hand was a metal wall—I had been dumped into a water tank, near the tea house, my quondam friends having thought me dead and wishing to dispose of the body.

"A projecting bit of iron had caught the end of the cord, reversed the twists and the water had brought back my senses quickly. In another minute I had used my sailor wits and was clambering out through the man-hole which had invited my ingress. I stood in the shadow of a

building that I had previously noticed very near the summer house.

“My stay in the water tank had been very brief, for I could see through the lattice-work that the man and woman who had so lately dragged me to what they expected to be my tomb were in the summer house. I crept swiftly up and saw them making ready to leave. They had my money belt on the rustic bench and each one wanted to carry it—then, again in that strange tongue, and below the breath, they began to quarrel.

“Mendoza, the big brute, showed his teeth at once when the dark eyed beauty pounced, tiger-like, upon the gold-laden leather. He raised his fist as if to strike and like a flash she drew a knife from her garter. I was now directly behind him, and as my breath or a breaking twig made him hesitate, she struck him, fair in the left—he falling forward as she drew out the blade. She hadn’t seen me until that instant—but it was easy for me to catch in the moonlight a look in her eyes of hatred and grief. Oh, God, that look! In it I read unutterable curses for having crossed her path.

“She turned from me, however, to Mendoza,



who lay prostrate at her feet, and bending over him—talking in the same foreign tongue and with a moaning that carried sorrow and regret as surely as it had anger previously. Glancing towards me, as though to ask the possibility of his being alive, I could but shake my head, and she fairly grovelled in her despair; hugging his body and calling to him in endearing tones, in Spanish and that other language.

“My God! How beautiful she was! Beautiful, a woman—and in her heart love and hate, cupidity and tenderness, seeming to try for mastery. As I stepped towards her she rose and turned—and the passion of a whole race was mirrored in her face. Never have I seen anything so wonderful as those jet black eyes! Her hair, which had shown at first only as a soft mass, dark as the night, with a little curl at one side, increasing the whiteness of her neck, had broken from its golden comb and ribbons of white, and fell to her waist in waves. I had only known this woman a matter of hours, but I was her slave as completely as though she had bought and paid for me.

“We were very near to each other; I could almost feel her breath, and the faint perfume

that I had noticed that first day in the drinking place at Colombo made itself felt. I was studying her face, and drunk with passion for her—even within the hour when she had tried to kill me and in the presence of her dead lover, slain by her hand. It seemed years before I could speak; then it was more pantomime than conversation.

“‘Come,’ I said, beckoning away. I held out my arms to her and indicated that I would share her flight and gladly take a part of the blame in the tragedy. My love for her was in my words and eyes and movements, and watching her I could see at first alarm, then awakening—then despair and hatred.

“‘Go,’ she said, her lips scarcely moving, yet with an accent of the deepest import. ‘Go; with you? No, no; no; no! Never. See what you have caused me to do—curse you, and your miserable breed forever! See! You have made me kill this man whom I loved. He was my life, and now he is dead—dead!’ She turned to the prostrate form again.

“Rising she turned once more to me as I stood in the door of the summer house. The moon was shining almost full upon her and her form

was silhouetted in white against the dark lattice-work. The look on her face had changed to resignation. Scarlet lips that had met mine to betray me a few moments before were tremulous and the glorious eyes glistened with unshed tears. As she turned I could see that she had picked up the blood-stained dagger, which had fallen after her lover fell.

“‘He has called me,’ she whispered, as though in a dream. ‘I will go to him, as I have always done; wherever fate led him. I will go to my Mendoza.’

“With her left hand she tore apart the drapery at her throat, revealing a bust as glorious as ever sculptor carved upon Hebe, and even smiled as if noticing my open admiration.

“The smile quickly changed to a look of hatred, however, as searching her bosom as though for the vital spot, she said: ‘Aye; you cursed Englishman; you dog. You came back too soon—but you shall not have me! No, no! I go to him—and together we will follow you over the earth!’

“Within arm’s length of her I was as one paralyzed, and I saw her tear asunder her garment as though to further inflame and disap-

point me, and then coolly plunge the little blade just below her breast.

“She fell into my arms and snatching out the knife I knew that my efforts would not avail—that the blood of the twain were upon it, and they were dead!”

\* \* \* \* \*

“What’s that Doctor? Oh, yes. Of course; of course. I wasn’t asleep. No—just thinking. Say, do you know I feel better than I have before in years—all the time I’ve had that inside and told no one; it’s a relief to share something like that. Of course I don’t feel that I was to blame—that is, not much. Well, maybe they’ll let me alone now that I’ve explained it. But you are asking for the end of the story. Well, I wouldn’t say that it has ended yet—but I hope so.

“Going back to Ceylon then—it was about one o’clock that night when I laid the body of the dead woman beside her lover and taking my money belt I left the plantation and struck out for the big woods. I decided at once that it wouldn’t do to be found in Colombo next day or ever again, and headed for Port de Galle. In a way I knew where I was going, but I was prac-



tically walking in my sleep the rest of that night, and, hiding closely at daybreak, managed somehow to work along the coast, but not too near, until some distance from Colombo. I had plenty of money, was used to roughing it, and in the course of a week I had reached the south end of the island and took passage on a vessel sailing for Australia.

“There wasn’t anything particular to tell about that voyage—only I heard some of the crew talking about the double murder that had taken place in Colombo and the fact that I had disappeared was mentioned as possible evidence against me. But I had grown a beard and was far enough away not to worry about that in Port de Galle. And later I made another voyage under a different name again.

“It was the voyage away from Sydney that later brought out the fact that I closely resembled the captain. My whiskers had been growing since the trouble in Ceylon, and I guess the captain of the *J. W. Auxland* and I could have swapped places without many people knowing it during the first few days out of Sydney. In size, coloring, age, hair, eyes and whiskers we were practically the same. At sea the captain

was not much dressed up—you know—and the second steward looked very similar—that being me.

“It had been a long time since the tragedy at Colombo, but I was thinking things over as we were coming into the China Sea, bound for Hong Kong. I had been taking a little nap forward when I thought I heard voices that I couldn’t understand. The ship had a crew of Malays and the white men were all far away—but the voices were perfectly plain, though whispering:

“ ‘There he is now’ said a soft, feminine voice.

“ ‘Si, Senora,’ was the reply, in a deep, restrained tone. ‘Now we get him; ze Englise hound!’

“Certain that I was dreaming, I recognized Elfreda and Mendoza. A chill crept over me—and I tried to reason with myself—my eyes were staring straight at the moon—and as I raised my head two gray gulls fluttered so near me that I thought they must have alighted on the deck.

“The next morning it was reported that the captain was dead. It was awfully strange—so everyone said—the officers called it suicide.

He had been taking a nap on the starboard side of the second bridge. Those big tramps have two bridges, you know. He was found strangled, with a wisp of silk around his neck—the ends twisted. It really didn't look as though he could have done it himself, and yet the two or three officers on the bridge below were certain that nobody had been above. 'Not a living thing had passed that way except a couple of gulls that had been following the ship the past few days,' said the second mate—and somehow I knew that Elfreda and Mendoza had thought they got me!

"We buried the captain at sea the next day, and nobody grieved as I did. Of course there wasn't the faintest suspicion in my direction. I was busy with the cook and cabin boy after mess and in quarters later and was apparently as much mystified as anybody when the poor captain was found dead.

"But you can bet I kept off the deck as much as possible the rest of the voyage, and, landing at New York, I decided to stay ashore. \* \* \* \* \*

And that's pretty much all of the story, Doctor—it may be finished soon, though. Well, I worked in restaurants and hotels all around in

the States. Came here from Baltimore about six months ago—and nothing else happened, until last night—no, it was the night before; but I haven't slept since, and it is on my nerves—I told you—or rather asked you, about the voices.”

The Captain shivered at the recollection. I did remember that he had said something about voices—at the very outset of our conversation—but I had forgotten in the interest of his story. “Yes,” I said. “But no doubt you were mistaken.”

“It's just about the anniversary of that night in Ceylon,” he said. “The moon was just like it is tonight, and somehow I believe that they have followed me—and are only waiting a chance to get me.” He looked furtively around as though anticipating something dreaded, yet inevitable. “They were outside my window last night—whispering, and I heard them, clearly.

“No use to say anything, Doctor, I knew the voices. They've talked right over my head in dreams, over and over again. But last night I was wide awake. The moon was shining in my window and through the screen I heard a rustling—then the voices—



“‘There he is,’ she said; ‘There he is; now we can get him!’

“‘That’s the Englise beast,’ he answered. ‘Si; si; we’ll get him.’

“I jumped up and went to the window—but they had gone. I couldn’t sleep. All night I laid awake. Tonight I have been to bed and got up to come down here. \* \* \* \* \* I’ll have to sleep sometime; maybe I’ll get some powders. Do you know what I should take, Doctor?”

The Captain recovered himself with an effort—adding quickly:

“No, no; of course not. I don’t want any powders. Or if I do I’ll look in at the little store on the corner—that’s open all night. See you tomorrow, perhaps; eh, Doctor. Ugh! I’m almost chilly—just talking about—well, good-night, Doctor. I’ll just go along.”

“Good night, Captain,” I said. “You ought to be tired enough to sleep tonight without drugs.” He took my hand as I extended it to him—and his was clammy. “Have you been taking things already?” I asked.

“No, Doctor, not a thing. But I thought I heard wings, just then; did you hear anything?” He shivered and started away. “Bah; I’m get-

ting nerves like an old woman. Good night; good night."

The Captain slowly passed down Hogan Street, turning at Adams, and I sat still for a few minutes, thinking over his weird story. It was past two o'clock now, and lighting another cigar I took my way toward Laura Street, going to my room. Just as I struck the match I thought I heard the whirring of wings. Something shimmered in the moonlight that suggested the idea of big birds—going westward.

"Pshaw!" said I to myself. "You're getting silly."

\* \* \* \* \*

I was late going to my breakfast-lunch the next day. Gilreath's great crowd of hungry folks that begin to call for pot-roast and spaghetti, corned beef and cabbage and almost everything else at about 11:30 had been fairly well satisfied by 2 o'clock p. m., and I could look the place over as I climbed onto a stool. I was expecting the Captain to serve me, but gave my order to another waiter who was handy, and not until I was paying my check did I ask about the stout man.

"O, the waiter the boys call the Captain?

Why, he hasn't been in today," said the manager. "No one here seems to know where he lives and I suppose he was out rather late last night, or something, and decided not to come to work today."

As I turned to go out the manager added: "Queer Jeems that fellow is—but he's a first class waiter—no fault to find with his work—reserved and uncommunicative. Guess he's seen better days—like a lot of 'em."

The telephone at the manager's elbow rang just then and as I moved on I was surprised, for the manager had raised a hand to indicate that I should wait.

His face wore a puzzled expression—then, answering, he said: "What's that? Our man Jones—the big fat Englishman? Dead! For Heaven's sake, what was the matter? What was that—O, yes,—Bay Street? Eh-huh. Yes, sure; I'll come down right away."

"And I'll go with you," I said, as the manager put up the phone. He called to an assistant and on the way told me that a servant in the rooming house had just discovered that the "Captain" was dead—and not asleep, as she had thought when passing the room earlier in the

day. The landlady had phoned to the police and to the restaurant where it was known the dead man had worked.

We reached the house just as two men from the Central police station were entering—and there was my friend of the night before, stretched sidewise across the bed. A policeman straightened him around, and as he was turned it seemed to me that I could see a red streak on his heavy neck. But maybe that was imagination.

A physician came in, and, making a cursory examination, remarked that the man had probably died about twelve hours previously to discovery.

“Here’s the reason,” he said, picking up a white paper from the little pine table, where it had lain near a glass that contained a few drops of water.

The necessary orders and directions were given and the man on the beat took charge, relieving the man from headquarters, waiting for the undertaker.

Behind the others I lingered a minute to look upon the face of this man who had known so little peace in this world; it was calm now; his eyes were closed. I was wondering if it



were better or worse that his people would never know his story and the end, when the officer interrupted my thoughts—

“Queer lookin’ feathers,” he said. He had been “sleuthing” about the room and picked them off the floor, near the window. “Guess he knocked them out of his pillow in his struggles.”

“Gull feathers!” I said to myself; even then amused—for there had been no struggle—and the poor pillow was guiltless of feathers.

Stepping towards the window I noticed for the first time that the screen had fallen inside the room; my foot touched the flimsy, adjustable wire arrangement and as I straightened it against the wall I saw on the rusted wires a raveling of white silk.

The officer had handed me the gray feathers, and, releasing them at the window, I watched them float away towards the St. Johns river, while ugly facts and weird fancies began a controversy in my brain that has not yet been settled.

# A GATE IN THE HIGH WALL

## A Story of Old Charleston

Gaunt, bare trees with snapping twigs, ribbon grass grown out of its borders and pitiful as a faded beauty; walks with identity nearly lost by scattered conch shells that once defined their limits and tufts of dried and tangled weeds. Over near a patched, but fallen, summer house, high stalks of pampas grass, frayed out like a much-used duster, and a tiny bridge whose rotted planking would surely have precipitated the venturesome to dry hollows below. A fountain rim, further on, which no doubt once gave the little lake its overflow, cracked and broken, the centerpiece gone and the basin overgrown with rank grasses, all dead and ugly. Here and there in the tangle of wild vines and seedlings showed patches of pale green. Cedars with unkempt and dusty plumes, a live oak that seemed to belie its name and a few hedge plants showing long absence of the gardener's hook. A single laurel—they call them magnolias in the South—proud and graceful, stood over near the house, its satin leaves catching the light that

probably seldom penetrated the sleeping wilderness below. Across from the fountain a shapeless mass of shells told of a grotto, and, near to a high iron fence at the east, stray conchs indicated formal flower beds—long ago—and a gravel walk that started at the huge iron gates, now chained and rusting away.

In the highest part of the old garden stood the house. Time's hand showed in the masonry, but its splendid lines were not lost. The brick, hand-made and perhaps brought from a far country, and maybe filled with iron—they tell that St. Michael's church is builded of brick so made—and the marble cornices and sills, although stained with age, gave ample detail of the fine chiseling; the red Spanish tiled roof seemed capable of defying another century of wind and rain. The great window-eyes of the house were closed with heavy blinds, as also the ample portal, tight shut like the lips of a giant asleep—yet in his rest giving full evidence of a stern command. "Call not the spirit of this house," it seemed to say, "in mockery or trifling."

The eye-windows to the north and east, when opened, looked out upon a strip of marsh land, and then away up the Cooper river that winds

down towards the sea. A little way from the high-walled garden could be seen, crumbling into shapelessness, earthworks, thrown up when Charleston was besieged years and years ago. Across the river miles and miles of pinelands, making fringe to the horizon—to the west of the river sparsely settled with here and there a wharf or factory, the peninsula being so narrow as to easily see from Cooper to Ashley, at an elevation.

A half-opened gate in the massive brick wall that was so often to be found in Old Charleston a few years ago, sometimes topped with broken glass and dating back to the days when all slaves must be on their master's premises when the drum beat in St. Michael's tower, had tempted me into the old garden, 'way up at the edge of the city, and, wandering and wondering, an hour went by. An alien, transplanted into the Southland, I had found much in Charleston to interest, but never before had I happened upon this deserted castle with its spacious, stone-walled garden.

And while I lingered, perhaps musing over what might have transpired within these walls, a huge Danish hound came slowly toward me



from a far section of the grounds I judged to have been the negro quarters—always removed a distance from the “big house.” He was a friendly animal, and I guess dogs always know their friends. Patting his head and speaking admiringly I saw following a negro girl—but she did not seem disposed to be rude to the interloper.

“Even’n’, suh,” she said, in response to my greeting. “But I aint he’rd no knock, suh.”

“Didn’t knock at all, Auntie,” I said. “Just walked right in through that gate in the wall. And whose place is this?”

“Dis am de DeBrough place, suh,” she answered. “But dey aint yere. \* \* \* \* \* An’ when yo’ goes out, pleze shet de gate; yas-suh.”

There was no arguing with this woman. Whatever faults the Southern negro may have they do not talk their master’s business matters over with strangers. I had found that out in my short stay, and, turning to leave, thanked her, patted my friend the Dane and again went through the wall gate. The night was now coming on; a cold mist was coming up from the river and a half-grown moon was making shadows in the deserted street that I had followed almost to



the marshes. Crossing two or three other dirt-paved streets I reached one with a car line and was soon down town again and back at work.

## II

May, with its lassitude, its new green draperies for the trees and flowers for the town gardens and spring styles on King Street, had come in its regular course, when, a few months later, I was trying to keep cool at the office. Not far from the bay, there was a slight breeze, and the electric fan overhead was doing its best, while I, without coat or collar or tie, plodded on as the big clock showed near midnight. I had just filled my pipe and was looking all about for a match when the telephone at my elbow rang violently. All smokers will understand that this was a moment of importance—and modern times having taken away the candles and later the gas jets, so convenient to users of the weed—a match must be found somewhere in the pigeon-holes or desk drawers or under some papers.

It had been a warm day—May is hot in the South sometimes, and things had not gone so well—slow thinking and slower action—a pipe

is a wonderful help when the brain is fagged. The match-box finally located, I took my time and let the phone ring—in fact I had forgotten that source of so much joy and sorrow and mixed emotions in the first few deep draws of Durham fine-cut. The bell stopped, and then started again, this time it seemed louder than before. Still I puffed away with a satisfied feeling and watched the smoke as it spread about, a fragrant cloud that I noticed was evidently displeasing two or three mosquitoes who had been trying to navigate the fan currents and get into my zone. It was now twelve o'clock and forgetting the phone I was thinking of a start for the boarding house, up Meeting Street, when the telephone din once more attracted my attention.

Grabbing the receiver off with a jerk I sent in a lively "Yes, yes; this is nine-double four! Who do you want?"

"Would like to speak to Mr. Debs Bookton," said a pleasant voice that I failed to recognize.

"This is Bookton," I snapped; "but what's the row? What is it all about?"

"I'm surely sorry I disturbed you, Mr. Bookton," said the even, quiet voice again. "If I

had time I should call personally instead of approaching you in this very informal way. I am Colonel DeBrough. You do not know me, of course, but I knew your father, in New Rochelle; heard that you were in Charleston and want you to come up to my house. Yes. Tonight. We are having a little informal party for my daughter. An invitation was sent you, but I find that it was unfortunately sent to a wrong address. No. It isn't too late and I've already taken the liberty of sending my carriage for you—probably you will find Jim waiting now. Your costume will be all right. It is strictly informal. Some of the boys, myself included, have on our uniforms. \* \* \* We are expecting you," he said, and, with a cheery laugh, hung up the receiver at the far end.

"Pictures in the smoke," said I, as I also hung up. "Somebody is evidently trying to string me."

"Waitin' fo' yo', suh," said a voice at the office door almost before I had swung around from the phone. "De Kunnel, he says I was to fotch yo', right away, suh."

An old darkey dressed as a footman was standing there—Jim, presumably. And, amazed at myself for the impulse, I rose and began to put

on collar and tie and coat. Stranger yet, I turned off the electric light and followed the negro downstairs to the street.

Strangely enough, I had not heard any vehicle on the street for an hour past—the cobble stones would have resounded at that time of night—but the carriage was there, a Victoria I guess they called it, with two horses and the driver way up in front. Fighting an impulse to go the other way I nevertheless stepped into the carriage and, as Jim got up beside the driver—another old negro man, away we went.

The night air and the motion acting as a stimulant I more fully realized the absurdity of the whole affair—here I was, almost a stranger in the city, going for a ride in a stranger's carriage, bound I knew not where—unless to the rendezvous of some robber band desirous of holding me for ransom or cutting off my ears!

“Hold up! Stop! Hey!” I yelled to the negroes on the front of the carriage, but they apparently did not hear and if anything drove faster. The moon was up, almost full, and through the well nigh deserted streets it seemed as though we were flying. No one paid any attention to us, although we were taking corners



and passing other vehicles, I thought, at dangerous speed. Twice I tried to attract the attention of policemen, but it was as though they had seen nothing, as we almost brushed one's coat on Marion Square, and dashed in front of the horse of another near a big church. I thought of jumping out—and drew back, realizing the hazard was as great as anything I might be going toward.

In what seemed both an age and a few seconds we were turning into a dirt street, and the carriage stopped suddenly in front of a great mansion brilliantly lighted and showing its fine lines in the moonlight.

A high iron fence, fantastically fashioned, was in front, and inside I could see the spacious grounds decorated and illuminated for a fete. The house and grounds seemed strangely familiar—but things were happening and I was not left to wonder when I had seen the place previously.

Abandoning now the idea that I was being abducted, I found myself stepping willingly to the pavement and through the gateway towards the house.

A tall, handsome man, wearing a gray uniform



—and his right arm in a white silk handkerchief sling, stepped forward as I ascended the marble steps. Without being told, I knew that this was Colonel DeBrough, and, glancing about, noticed that the house and grounds were filled with people, in the light and attractive garb of summer. Not all, though, for the men, young and old, seemed to be wearing gray uniforms—even a boy of not more than thirteen who had run down the steps as I came in, was in uniform—Confederate gray I knew it to be—and somehow thought it was the most natural thing in the world.

On the wide porch the light inside showed great rooms, handsomely furnished and lighted—with candles—and that only made me remember that the St. Cecelia society, in town, always used candles to light their ball-room—'way down to the nineteen hundreds. The drawing rooms presented a scene of attractiveness such as I had seldom gazed upon—but now the Colonel was extending his left hand and saying:

“I know you will excuse my left hand, Mr. Bookton,” with a merry laugh such as I had heard over the phone a short time before. “The boys said I held up my right hand for a Yankee

bullet just so as to get a few days off from Virginia. It isn't much of a scratch and doesn't interfere with the pleasures of the night at all—although it's off to the front again tomorrow.

“You are in time for the cotillion, Mr. Bookton. Yes; and your summer suit is all right—gray in fact, although not exactly the gray we are wearing. Everything is strictly informal, as I told you; and I may repeat that your father's son is welcome in my house at any time and under all circumstances. We'll talk more of other days at another time, maybe—I hope so—but now I must find you a partner for the dance.”

A group of half a dozen young people were passing up the steps and into the house when the Colonel called, cheerily:

“Helen!” he said. “Helen dear; just a minute.”

Maybe the combination of lights, the music, that now surged out from the lower rooms, the incense of jessamine and honeysuckle and gardenias, had to do with things that followed. I only knew that, when Helen left the group and came to her father's side and nodded and smiled as he told her of his acquaintance with my fam-

ily and the chance of my coming out to the party, I was falling in love with Helen faster than ever a man fell down stairs.

Presently I found myself saying "and you can and will dance the cotillion with me?" totally indifferent to the absolute adoration expressed in my eyes and tone of voice. This special honor of dancing with the daughter of the house and maybe the belle of the neighborhood—I was sure of this part at the moment—was intoxication unusual. We turned into the front parlor and here I was introduced to her mother and a score of young people and some of their elders. The music, which had been the prelude, now proclaimed the beginning of the cotillion, and through its pretty and interesting measures and figures I was conscious only of a desire to get back to my partner whenever the leader separated us. In fact I was being led and without protest—a single strand of her golden-brown hair, petulant because held by tortoiseshell bars, strayed out—to be laughingly put back when noticed by the owner, held me tighter and more securely than could a cable chain.

An intermission in the dancing—(when had I seen such grace and beauty!) and Helen es-

corted me through the other rooms of the house, the dining room, all set for the supper which was shortly to be served; the library with its leather chairs and shelves of books and pictures by Sully, Reynolds and Stuart, and then, following Helen into the garden, it was to walk through conch-shell-lined paths, across a tiny lake. The waters, dimpling, reflected the moon rays and reproduced in white garlands the Cherokee roses growing away from the banks. The plash of the fountain, beyond great masses of variegated ribbon grass and pampas, was faintly echoed as miniature waves lapped the supports of the rustic bridge. Pausing near a summer house—a latticed enclosure with fanciful roof and benches, Helen discovered a couple already in possession—and very happy.

“We ought not to disturb Vic and Palaja,” she said, turning away. “Vic is my cousin, you know; and she’s from the West Indies. O, very dark and beautiful!”

I did not know—until then—but I knew that Helen was beautiful and that whatever she wished was my wish.

On we went in the perfumed night, so full of light and happiness, toward a corner of the



garden almost hid by a glorious growth of trees and flowers; these were azaleas—a wonderful plant that covers itself with red and purple and snow white and scarlet and mottled flowers before a leaf comes forth. I recognized the wonderful fragrance, for I had previously visited that world famous spot, Magnolia Gardens, on the Ashley, and been added to the list of enthusiasts. Here we found another latticed and rustic shelter, and from the steps a view was had of the house and grounds.

How wonderously beautiful it was! A magnificent laurel in front of the house, standing like a sentinel, displayed hundreds of huge white blooms against the deep glistening shadow of the foliage; their heavy odor, lotus-like, came to us, a drowsy caress borne on the wings of the winds which stirred the steel-shimmer of the waters over beyond the place and rustled the leaves of the pink and white oleanders near the big gates.

Silent, in the spell of the night, watching the river, a shadow passed along, then upon it a break of smoky, yellow light; a lumber raft coming down the Cooper. The negroes with their long sweeps were droning:



“My yaller gal—gal—gal,  
She name bin Sal;  
She name bin Sal,  
My Yal-ler gal-l-l!”

“Do you like our Southland?” Helen is saying.

And then I heard myself talking about the things I had seen and the false impressions dispelled. I predicted great prosperity for the South and everything that seemed to be desirable for Helen’s section of the country, and all the while I was trying to get my voice to a personal subject. I was madly in love with Helen and wanted to tell her so, regardless of consequences. Somehow she seemed to understand that my words were not all that suited me, and was amused—not angry. In desperation I asked if I might smoke.

“Surely, smoke; I like a good cigar—when someone else smokes it—Daddy is a great smoker and gets his from Havana, when he can,” she said.

She struck the match for me on the sole of the daintiest little white shoe that I had ever seen and held it out to me—I touched her hand to steady it—and looking straight into the bronze-brown eyes, and then at the Cupid’s bow mouth,

the lips just parted to show a row of pearls, her unruly hair, the soft whiteness of her neck and the graceful turn of her arm and figure—just budding into womanhood, I felt myself regaining control of my tongue—

“Helen!” I almost shouted in my eagerness, imprisoning the soft little hand the while, “I—”

But the match had burned too long and fell on my hand. I started involuntarily—with the pain—and—it seemed that her face was changing—

\* \* \* \* \*

The face I looked into was that of a telegraph messenger boy.

“Sorry to bother you, boss;” said the boy, with an ill-concealed grin; “But you dropped your pipe and spilled the fire. Guess you were taking a little nap. And here’s a telegram for you; it’s important, I guess, and sixty-eight cents to collect.”

On the floor lay my pipe; ashes all over my desk and a smarting sensation on my right hand told of sparks caught in passing. My watch lay on the desk—it said 12:05—I had been dreaming!

The telegram was from New Rochelle and sug-

gested that I return north as soon as possible to settle matters concerning my father's estate. The next day I was northward bound, with my return problematical.

### III

Straggling thro' hedge of branches bare  
The red-gold sun makes jest of dropping leaves,  
Of blistered bark and splintered limb—  
Thro' to a ruined resting place, and there  
Finds challenge in the gold-glints of a maiden's hair.

Business matters made it necessary for me to change my plans very considerably in the next few years after my short stay in Charleston. For two years I lived in Florida. Then another change seemed advisable, and, in February, again I found myself in the old City by the Sea, this time not knowing just how long it would be to linger within the sound of Old St. Michael's chimes and the cry of the shrimp vendors in the early mornings. It was only natural that I should recall the remarkably pleasant briar-pipe dream, soon after reaching Charleston, and when within a few days I had found time for a stroll, my desire to seek out the old garden once more was strong. It wasn't very

pleasant weather—February is not a very good month in that section, but I determined to try for the gate and the garden, again to live over that perfectly wonderful hour (really five minutes) that I had enjoyed in my dream.

More than thirty-five years had gone over my head and the world had given me all that I deserved—and many know that this is but sorry recompense for the work and worry of existence. All, and no more. The most of my life had been lonely. Maybe it was my fault—but what has that to do with it?

This afternoon was all my own, and I reached the neighborhood by asking questions and making a few mistakes—although the city had not changed that I could see—and the dirt was still in some streets and cobblestones in others. I had stumbled across the dream place by accident at first—now it was to find it without having known of other than general directions. There are many places yet where high walls—some with glass bottles broken and worked into the cement at the top—show the futile attempts made by owners to protect property—living and inanimate. I approached the place this time from the front—where Jim and the carriage had

brought me in the smoke-cloud picture, and there was the big house, all tight shut and forbidding, and the great iron gates all curled and twisted and fashioned in rusted metal flowers and spears and loops, close bound by a rusty chain.

Following around the high wall through sand and weeds it was to locate on the back street the little gate. It was tight shut, and remembering the colored woman's remark I tapped sharply with my cane, and waited. There was no response from the inside.

Two negroes—so black that you couldn't tell where their clothes stopped and their heads began—were going along, trailing a toy wagon filled with somebody's wash. They noticed me, and said:

“De people what lives in ther's done move away.”

I thanked them, but, indignant that the language should thus be murdered, I gave the gate a vicious kick—just a flat-footed push, maybe, but with some exasperation behind it. The jolt loosened something and I tried again. This time the result was satisfactory. I had forced a staple from the old mortar, and, the bar fall-



ing, I walked, unabashed, through the hole in the wall as though I had business there.

How little the garden had changed since my first prow!—how different from my fanciful smoke sketch! There were the dried, dead weeds, the ribbon grass gone rioting and losing caste; a few toads hopped away as I tramped over the scattered conch shells and made my path toward the further summer house.

I was not surprised to see my old friend, the Dane, come lazily toward me as I proceeded—he had been far in the garden this time, however, and not towards the negro quarter. He seemed to know me—dogs do not forget—and as I patted him and spoke I thought I heard a voice, in the garden.

“Tiger! Tiger!” it said. There was no mistaking it now. The voice, low and musical, was not a command, but a call that man or dog must answer, the sweetness fairly sugar-coating the terrible name of the animal summoned.

Then, almost at my elbow, seated at ease on the steps of the ruined summer house—it was to discover the girl of my dream!

“Helen!” once more my voice was raised; in bewilderment I feared that I was again dreaming.

“Yes,” she said; her voice sounding like rose petals falling on the strings of a harp, “that is my name,” (I felt myself pinching my arm or doing something to be sure that I was awake), “but I think you might mention your own name—and explain how you came here and why you are walking in grandfather’s old place—I thought I closed the gate when I came in.”

Once more my voice failed me—was I indeed awake—or was this another dream? Standing silent I could see a shade of compassion coming to replace that of startled resentment.

“I see you are a friend of Tiger’s,” she said, charitably trying to ease my mind, “and maybe you had permission to come in—”

It was now possible for me to talk a little, and rattle along was the order for a few minutes, while Helen sat, toying with a few plumes from the pampas tangle that grew, despite neglect, near the old shelter. Prosy details regarding my family, my previous residence in Charleston and return after some years away. I had found out in some way that my folks had known the DeBrouchs in the years gone by, and, not daring to tell her of my dream, I enlarged upon the former intimacy of our antecedents and enlarged

upon my love for the South and desire to live there always hereafter.

The bronze-brown eyes were looking straight into mine and a lock of golden-brown hair that had played truant from the tortoise-shell school nodded to me in the night breeze—now making itself felt from the river.

“Yes,” she is saying, “I’m sure your father and my grandfather must have been good friends, as you say;” but her tone was not convincing.

Over on the river—a huge, ugly ship was at pier, within reach almost, and the negro roustabouts were still packing cotton into the big hold. They work in gangs and are paid for the amount accomplished—oftimes they sing—and now their chanty was clearly audible, with the drift of the wind—

“Ent yo’ seen my Lizer?  
Ent yo’ seen my Lizer?  
Ent yo’ seen my Li-izer,  
Wid de grate, big lumpkin ey-zer!”

We both laughed—for the rhythm and wailing harmonies were ill suited to the mixed English and “Gullah” words.

Now Helen is saying, “Grandfather DeBrough was killed just at the close of the war. He left

here the day after Aunt Helen's nineteenth birthday party—It was a lovely party, the folks said; and he never came back. \* \* \* \* \* Those must have been awful times, Mr. Bookton. And hard times came afterwards also—my mother sometimes tells us of the hardships, and then says that we should not dwell on the unhappy memories, only be glad that the war is over and pray that there may never be another. \* \* \* \* \* But will you come over to the house—it's only on the next street—and meet my mother, and the others?"

As in the picture, briar-made, I see myself following her nod and call.

And probably I always will.

## WHEN ELMVILLE BACKSLID

“Verily,” said the Great Evangelist! “verily, things shall be even as they are, unto the end; and henceforth the Golden Rule, that I have brought unto you, shall be the measure for every action, and the reward will be Eternal life; Amen!”

He was a Great Evangelist. No discussion was allowed on the subject; and as a matter of fact, he admitted it himself—in the carefully prepared press notices handed to the editor of the Elmville *Times* each week. When asked about his title the Reverend Parenthesis C. Hawley was likely to change the subject and lead into a discussion of the eradication of the taint of original sin by verbal purging and athletic sprinting toward the collection table.

The “Great” revival, which had been in progress at Elmville the past month, was not of the common, or garden, variety. Not at all. Special features were announced daily. The moving picture man’s machine and operator had been secured in advance; the town band and or-



chestra engaged for indoor and outdoor service, the town hall secured; and the revival was the only thing going on in Elmville.

Appealed to by Hawley, the local preachers had closed their churches for the time, and early closing of stores and postoffice made it easy for the young men to take the girls—and a large number of the young people had been drafted for a volunteer choir.

Each night since the first of June the Great Evangelist had preached and prayed, and it was noticed that the mourners' bench and the collection table were highly popular. The latter idea, borrowed from the Kirk in auld Scotland, and also from the southern negro, of letting the light shine full upon dollar and dime, was found highly effective. Each citizen and citizeness walked up the aisle and deposited upon the table, near Hawley, a contribution, while the band and orchestra played and the choir sang their loudest, just before the moving pictures. Hawley, and Hawley only, kept an eye and a hand on the collection table and knew the financial situation to a nickle (naturally no pennies were brought up to the table).

At the Elmville bank each morning the Great

Evangelist changed the silver and nickels into paper money and when the ones and twos got too bulky he would get larger notes.

The weeks had gone on, however, and now it was noticed that in order to fill the mourners' bench it was necessary to bring up some who had already been converted and wept over and "shaken by the hand" and comforted. The signs were that there would be a "call" for Hawley to go and preach elsewhere. So, after a few preliminary efforts, and the complete conversion of a tramp printer, who had happened into Elmville that day and mistook the town hall for a picture show, and the declaration on the part of Ah Sing, the laundryman, that he was almost a "Chlistian" and would hereafter keep his front door closed on Sunday (and only deliver collars through the back door to those neglectfuls who might otherwise have a good excuse for not attending church), the revival came to a close.

"It will be hard to get on without Brother Hawley," said the Elmville milkman, the morning after the last farewell meeting at the town hall. He was talking to Mrs. Perkins at the kitchen door, and into her large, shining, quart pitcher he poured a full pint of unwatered milk.

“Yes, that it will, Deacon;” she said. “I don’t know how we’ll get along. I feel so different, since he came. That about the Golden Rule—It’s so beautiful!—and here is an extra ticket—for a pint of milk I got last fall—and forgot about.”

The banker was glancing over the report of that last meeting, in the *Times*, when Lawyer Brown came in.

“I’m going into the vegetable business,” said Brown to the banker, after the usual greetings. “Now, when you want anything in that line, let me know. I have put away my law books forever. Never again shall my voice be raised in defense of guilty men. My office will be fitted up to receive and sell beans, turnips, poultry, eggs and such. No doubt you are surprised; but I’m through with the Law, and I hope Elmville is also through with it.”

The banker sighed.

“Brown,” he said, finally, “I’m sure you are right. And what’s more I mean to do as you have done. It is to the soil that we should turn for bread and to the Almighty for comfort! As soon as I can arrange matters I mean to quit the banking business and go to farming. There

I shall not be taxing anybody and will earn my subsistence by the 'sweat of my brow' as the Bible commands."

It was something like this all over town during the day.

If the *Times* had been a daily instead of a weekly, with extras as easy as they come nowadays, the newsies would no doubt have soon been shouting about the shaded, quiet streets: "Uxtra! Uxtree! Extree!! Doctor Splints has tossed his knives into the well (literally) and advises his patients to heal themselves. He is also hiring out to market gardeners or dairymen, by the day!" "Special Uxtree! Pastor Jones has confessed to the town clerk that his connection with the West End Church has always been for revenue only! He is returning to his former trade as a blacksmith and will take any work offered without kicking!" "Elkton, the shoe man, admits that in his business he has been pinching the people unduly, especially since the new tariff went into effect. Since his conversion he has decided to sell his entire stock at thirty per cent of marked prices. He also admits that it is an auction lot and that the styles are about six years old. Elkton declares that when his



shoes are disposed of he means to raise ducks and gather wild blackberries and chestnuts, in season !”

One by one the announcements would have been made, showing a change of heart and a desire to “do unto others,” and not to “do others,” as had been the case, apparently.

“In all Elmville” the Great Evangelist had said, on that last-farewell night, “there will be peace, and plenty, because every soul has been saved for itself and to everlasting joy! You will have no more need for doctors, or lawyers, or preachers, or bankers, merchants, tailors or policemen, when things have come to a final adjustment. Everybody will be friendly with his neighbor and will give of his plenty to those who have not; helping one another, and all because you have been purified and saved. There will be no more sickness or sorrow or contention !”

“Amen !” cried the crowd that filled the town hall and the steps and the street for a block about, and was listening to each word uttered by the Great Evangelist and ready to acquiesce in anything he might say.

And the very next day had found things stirring, as suggested.



In every line of business, every trade and profession and calling there seemed to be a desire to reform.

Miss Mannikin's sign, "Fashionable Milliner and Modiste," which had stood for years in Elmville as a menace to the pocketbook of husbands and fathers, was covered during the forenoon with a large strip of light tan wrapping paper upon which was written, "Hats and Plain Sewing," in five point, angular script.

Hiram Beesley, sent to the grocer's for ham, returned without it—and his mother was dumfounded (at first) by the report:

"Mister Petersen sez as all his hams is not fitten ter eat—and he'z agoin' ter send 'em back ter Brimley termorrer—and efter this iz agoin' ter buy fust-class meetz—he sez."

Of course when Mrs. Beesley remembered about the Great Evangelist and the Golden Rule it was all right—and Hiram was dispatched to yard to catch a chicken for dinner.

Old man Blick, up at the hardware store, had never really cared much for the telephone—but on that long remembered Monday he let two customers wait some time while he talked to Farmer Blivens, two miles out from Elmville.

The store end of the conversation was something like this:

Blick: "Hello Blivens! Is that you? This is Blick, you know, the hardware man. Yes. No! No! I don't want to make you neglect your work. Stop swearing, man! You are risking your immortal soul! And besides, the telley-phone company don't 'low it. Well—No! I haint gone crazy—nuthin' of the sort; jest got religion—that's all. No, en-deed—no! I beant tryin' to convert you. That's for better than me to try. What I wanted to tell you was about them nails you bought here last week. Yes, yes; you paid for 'em; sure. But I overcharged you about two-bits on a keg. Yes—don't have a fit—That would be about \$2, and you can drop in and get it when you come to town again." (Noise suggesting that Blivens had fallen off the other end of the line, with some remarks in the prohibited list.)

"Strawberries don't look as good as usual, Mr. Cross," said the greengrocer, looking over the baskets brought in that day.

"Only difference," said Cross "is that they are jest as they cum from the patch—no Deaconing. You'll find 'em all right, even if they do

look scattering. Y'see Parson Smither's interpreting of Brother Hawley's re-marks, tel'd me as how I oughtenter fix up my stuff a-tall, a-tall. Jest let it go as it grows.\* \* \* \* \*They'll be thirteen cents today; that's about what they're wuth, wholesale, I guess \* \* \* \* and you oughter sell 'em for fourteen, bein' as how your rent's low and the airly spring hez left yer a right smart of coal for the fall."

Elmville, a country town complete unto itself, had a fertile outlying section, and while many of these farmers traded at the county seat and were seldom seen in the town, it was expected that one or two days in each week would find the racks filled with teams and business good. But since the departure of Brother Hawley things were changing in all manner of ways. At first the coming of strange teams and men from distant points in the country was the occasion of mild surprise, but they kept coming and all seemed to have heard about the cuts in prices and the long measure given in all of the Elmville stores. Jones, the grocer, Blick, the hardware man and Upson, the proprietor of the Elmville Emporium, had little time to discuss

politics or even to quote passages from the sermons of the Rev. Parenthesis C. Hawley.

“I’ll just be golswiggered—” said Upson to his wife, about a week after the departure of the Great Evangelist, “I’ll just be—!”

“Ezra!” remonstrated his companion for life. “Be keerful! And let thy communications be yea, yea; and nay, nay!”

“Well—I forgot—Maranthu—but I’m clean flabbergasted; that’s sure—and so are you. Why, since I begun to be ’zactly square with everybody and marked them goods all back to near cost, the customers is coming frum all over the Universe, I believe! How they found out about it beats me! All day long the store is full of people I never even heard of before—and they are getting my stock by the wagon-load. It’s cash trade—the outsiders—but the town folks is all creditin’ their stuff, and there’s not much money comin’ in. I’d calkerlated to go to Brimley’s ’bout the fust of next month—but if this thing keeps up I’ll have to go sooner—or give an order to one of the drummer fellers, which I don’t like to do.”

“Possibly you may, at some time in the near future, if not at present, desire to purchase some



fowls?" said Trial Justice Weeks, calling at Mrs. Meyers' back door. "I have opened a hennery at my place and will supply eggs and chickens at reasonable prices."

"But your business?" said Mrs. Meyer. "What of that?"

"Well," said Weeks, sadly; "of course I believe in upholding the dignity of the law, and all that, you know, but everything seems to be upside down since the Great Evangelist was here. Why, just a few days ago that scamp, Wash. Jenkins, was caught robbing Mrs. Simpkins' hen roost, and when he was brought before me, Mrs. Simpkins, (whom you may remember, ma'am, had a seat on the mourners' bench, right up clost to Brother Hawley; and folks says didn't even shut her eyes when he was prayin') declared that she only admitted the Golden Rule, and the black rascal went off chuckling and grinning, just as though he hadn't had one of her hens under his coat when caught."

The Rev. Smithers, at the Middle Street Church, preached a strong sermon the following Sunday, before a very large and most attentive congregation—but the collection baskets came back nearly empty. No comment was made on



the subject of finance, however, though the pastor's tone seemed a little regretful when giving out the closing hymn.

"It aint so much our fault," said Lawyer—(no—ex-lawyer) Brown, as he joined the preacher after service. "We just naturally haven't any money—but I'm going to send you up a nice mess of beans from the very first that comes in tomorrow."

The preacher thanked him, and went on—but didn't tell his wife, for there were already vegetables enough for a boarding house on his pantry floor, and a pretty fair supply for two people growing in his own garden.

What Brown had said for the people in church was true of the whole town apparently. Accounts were running at the grocer's and the butcher's and baker's and while nobody was refused credit the dealers didn't encourage trade.

The postoffice was about the only place in Elmville that hadn't been affected by the visit of the Great Evangelist.

"Stamps don't cost much to make, that's true," admitted Postmaster Wilkinson, when asked by a patron if he couldn't let him have six for ten cents, on tick; "but the Government won't let

me sell them any cheaper than regular prices—and won't trust anybody at all."

It was at the postoffice, however, that something most important happened.

"Wisht you'd see ef there's ennythink from my boy, over ter Brimley," said Josiah Jenkins one bright afternoon about a fortnight after Elmville had started to reform.

"Right yew be," said the postmaster briskly, fishing up an envelope from the general delivery. "Right yew be; and it seems like he's writ you all about it—from the size of the letter—ha! ha!—and mebbly you'll tell us how he's gittin' on—we're all mighty proud of Eb, you know."

Jenkins had just sold his load of potatoes at the general store for a very small price—in trade—and it had taken all his forbearance to avoid arguing with the merchant who had given him an abundance of the verbal Golden Rule and a skimpy silver measure for his excellent potatoes. Although living outside of Elmville he had visited the town several times to hear the Great Evangelist, and he was trying to be as "good" as anybody. This letter from Eb came in right well, at the time, however, for it suggested something. Maybe his son Eben, up at

the county seat, could arrange to dispose of the rest of the potatoes in Brimley, where evidently if they had less religion they had more money. He was working this over in his mind as he carefully clipt the end of the envelope and took out three or four neatly typewritten pages. He smoothed them out, adjusted his specs, and with some show of pride, began to read:

“DEAR DAD:” (the letter began). “You’ll be glad to know that I’m all right and getting along fine. Mr. Bailey says he is pleased with my work and he’s dropped a hint that I’ll probably get a raise next month. Isn’t that fine! I certainly like it up here, but of course I get homesick sometimes for you all, and whenever I get a chance I’ll come over. Lots of love to mother and Susie and Little Jimsy and yourself.

“Oh, yes. By the way; I’ve something to tell you about that man who was conducting a revival in Elmville sometime ago. You remember you spoke about him in a letter. Well, later he came over here and started a revival in the hall over the engine house.

“Now last Tuesday there was a show in town. A sort of wild west business. You know what I mean, something like Buffalo Bill brought to

Elmville three years ago?" Well, the cowboys were knocking around town after their work was over that night and two of them stopped in at the revival. They thought it was a picture show. Well, I was there, at your suggestion; near the door, when the cowpunchers peeked in.

"They took a look at the Evangelist and then at each other.

" 'Parenthesis Charley, with his moustache shaved off,' said one of the men softly to the other. 'If that aint him may I never ride another round-up!'

" 'Well I'll de d——d!' said the other; and before I could get another look at the pair they were off.

"The cowboys came back, however, in about a minute, and they had company. Two or three more men from their show, judging by the costumes, and two of Brimley's policemen. Naturally the party attracted attention, and, Dad, that Evangelist certainly looked scared. He hadn't noticed the two men there first, but the uniforms and the bunch of show men caught his eye quick and he made a dash, white as a sheet, for the back door leading from the platform.



The choir had just sung a rousing hymn and Hawley was starting in to talk about the Golden Rule; but he broke for the door on a run and didn't finish the sentence he had begun. The door opened as he approached and there was another big cowpuncher who grabbed him and held on 'til the policemen came up.

"The Brimley chief turned to the crowd, which had stood up and was almost in a panic, and told everybody to take it quietly and advised the people to go home—somebody whispered 'fire'—but Chief Braddock stopped that quick.

" 'There isn't any fire—and there won't be no trouble,' he said, 'leastwise unless some of you make it, except for this here gent.'

"As the crowd still waited, one of the cowboys, who had taken hold of the Evangelist, made a little speech.

" 'This here gent,' he said, pointing to Hawley 'is one of the nerviest flimflammers in the country, bar none. I regret to admit that for a time he was a member of the Two Hundred and Two Ranch Show, as barker and ticket seller, and his de-partyure wuz made between stations and wid a considerable roll of our money. That same was in Nevady, something



over a year ago—but since then we've been on the lookout for him, expecting almost anything—but he fooled us. Never once suspected he would try the ree-ligus game. By the way, he is wanted in Oklahomy for cattle-stealing, and a re-ward is offered for his return to the sheriff of Blank county. We hopes as how you will excuse us for interruptin', but we need Mister Parenthesis Charley, and need him bad!"

"Some of us went to the jail that night and heard that Hawley had over three thousand dollars and two pistols in his pockets. He also had a bunch of letters that the officers said he had forged, recommending himself as an Evangelist. He was evidently planning an extended tour and thought himself well clear of former companions."

\* \* \* \* \*

The postmaster had been the only listener when Jenkins began to read the letter from his son; but before it was over several others had drifted in. As the letter was finished and Farmer Jenkins slowly put it back into the envelope the silence in the postoffice was oppressive.

"Well, isn't that—" began the postmaster.

But nobody seemed inclined to follow up and complete the expression.

Within an hour the story was all over town. A copy of the *Brimley News*, with the story in a little more detail, came later—and the doubters were silenced before early candle light.

\* \* \* \* \*

Elmville woke up the next day as though from a Rip Van Winkle sleep. If one had listened intently the creak of the milkman's pump might have been heard as early as 4 a. m. Scarcely an hour later Dr. Splints was visible hitching up his buggy and making for the home of Widder Elkins, who had sent for him several days ago—and had been told that nothing could be done. Lawyer Brown was noticeable by his absence from the garden, at sunrise, for the excellent reason that he had taken a night trip to Brimley to accept an offer made that morning by a man starting a lawsuit against a neighbor.

Things were becoming normal again as the morning wore on, for it appeared that even the strawberries had heard the news, and the big ones had successfully reached their proper place at the top of the basket when inspection time came. The grocer, who hadn't very much of a

turn for letter-writing, was found carefully wording a letter countermanding a special order of No. 1 hams and shoulders and in the Emporium Proprietor Upson and his clerks spent the early hours cutting off special sale price tags and remarking bills that had been figured with a heavy discount.

The sun shone brightly, the birds sang blithely and cheerily, and the people were moving about with more animation than had been noticeable for some weeks—and it was evident that each one was bent upon doing something that would better conditions, or bring about a good result; without a mean thought, each one was planning to get just a trifle the best of a bargain; to have Mary dress a little bit better than Mrs. Iverson—that was all.

Very properly and naturally, Miss Mannikin, the little milliner, was the last to open her place of business—but she came out that pleasant and memorable morning, at about 8 o'clock, and removed the shutters that had hid a wealth of wonderful creations of feathers and fur and flounces. A few moments later she brought out a chair, and carefully removed the paper from the sign—

And Elmville, fully recovering its balance, could read once more that this was the place for all men and women to come when in search of the

FASHIONABLE MILLINER AND MODISTE.

## TRAUMEREI

(Andante ———)

Midsummer sunset, after a golden day, tempered by cooling winds from the Blue Ridge, not very far away. A stir in the air as the business folks are getting home and taking up the odd things that are to be done about. There's something akin to music in the plash of many miniature fountains making glad the green lawns of which Salisbury is so proud. The homes clustered near the business section are vine-clad and pretty; their lines suggesting comfort, a quiet life, little change.

On the wings of the breeze now can be heard coming from the little stone church strains of music. The windows are open and the slanting rays of the sun, coming through masses of ivy and mingling the colors of the glass, fall upon the snow-white hair of a man who sits on the organ bench and seems to be dreaming as he lightly touches the keys. He is playing Traumerei, that haunting theme of Schumann, known everywhere and understood by everyone. Dreaming, it means, and with appeal as uni-



versal. The old organist is not asleep—his eyes are open and very bright—but he is not heeding the music pages on the organ rack. The melody is well known to his fingers and his feet—begun, it plays itself. Any musician will tell you that.

The organist seems looking far beyond the gray walls and their Gothic windows; the gorgeous tints of the sunset reflect in his eyes—or is that the spark of love and joy and hope that shows there; called up by a re-turned memory page? The wind has caught a long spray of ivy on the Gospel side window and is tapping rather loudly where it reads “Sacred to the Memory of Pierre Julian and Marie, His Wife,” but the organist heeds it not. The melody floats through the quiet church and out into the warm afterglow; it is harmony. All nature dreams and must recognize the theme. Delicate as the sigh of a child; imperious as the edict of a king; “Dreaming” we all go where we would and do and dare.

Now the bells from the court house, down the street, announce six o’clock, and the organist, giving a signal to the blower that his work is over for the afternoon, turns to the pile of music nearby and selects some pages well-used and suggestive of an approaching event. He has just

arranged the Mendelssohn wedding march and the Bridal Chorus from Wagner's Lohengrin when the blower comes in from behind the organ. It should be explained that in some of the older churches the "wind" for the pipe organ is furnished by the exertions of a healthy human at the end of a bellows which somewhat resembles those used in the old-fashioned blacksmith shop. As long as the sexton—or his substitute—pumps, the organ can be played. If he should doze off the music stops.

Abraham Lincoln Jones, black, loose-jointed and not especially fond of work, is disposed to talk a little with the organist. Naturally liking music, Abe, as he is familiarly called, feels that he contributes a good share to the production in St. Jude's—through his muscular exercises behind the organ.

"Iz yo' gwinter play dat trembly piece endurin' de ceremonies; Mister Robson?" he says, as the organist looks up.

"You mean the last one I was playing?" asks the other, smiling.

"Yassir; yassir; dat's hit; wid de trembly notes way up yander and de rumblin' wid yo' foots."

“Well, Abe. That’s Traumerei—it means dreaming, and when I play it for a wedding service it is supposed to suggest the sweet and happy dreams of a young couple just starting out together—to make a home.” Ernest Robson sighed deeply as he stopped speaking.

“Yo’ aint feelin’ bad; is yo’, Mister Robson?”

“No, Abe. I’m all right. Feeling very well indeed. But a wedding service is always rather sad for me. I’ll try not to let anyone know that I’m sad tomorrow, however. Great preparations, I hear, up at Judge Wilkins’s house. Eh, Abe?”

“Dey jest nachully is; yessir. Yo’ know my ole ’ooman wuks at de Judge’s house an’ she ’low’ as dey ent never seen no suh doin’s in all de days—not sence de wah. Huh! Huh! Sech a cookin’ and dress-makin’ and cleanin’ up fer comp’ny, and all de w’ile Miss Marj’ry carryin’ on like de ’cashun wuz undemented.”

It was the organist’s turn to laugh at this big word, but he guessed what the darkey meant, and his genuine amusement was caught up by the sexton.

“Huh! huh! huh! I specks I orter get down town now. Liza dun tole me fer bring sum t’ings frum de store.” Abe started away, and, re-

membering more details of the wedding preparations, stopped. "Huh! huh! I dun 'membered what Miss Marj'ry said yisterd'y—when I wuz in, after Liza and our dinner. She sez—'Abe; yo' ole raskill;' (Huh! huh.) 'Abe,' she lows rite like dat. 'Ize so happy I cud hug de whole worl', an' I sez quick off—'Miss Marj'ry, excoose me—pleze; coz my ole ooman is mighty pertickler an' liabul ter git jellus.'"

"And what did Miss Marjory say to that?" queried the organist, much amused.

"She 'low' as 'twus de fust time she hab been turn' down een a long time—and den gone off laffin', fit ter kill!"

"Fit to kill!" repeated the organist, as the darkey passed out the side door, chuckling to himself. But Ernest Robson was not laughing, now. He sighed again, and leaning forward over and against the now voiceless keyboard; rested his snow-crowned head upon his arms. It was dusk and the air was becoming scented with the odor of moon-flowers. Those great white blooms that were opening wide on trellis and porch near by. The tide was at flood—far off at the seashore—the day at the turn, in this



lovely little Carolina city of peace and contentment and homes.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

## II

### Romance (Piu moto——pf)

The pinch of poverty was everywhere in evidence in the poorly furnished room; yet love should be there. For a cradle in the corner certainly held a child. At the plain deal table near the centre a woman sat and alternately read—wept—and wrote. She was only a young wife; a young mother; and her eyes wandered from the letter she had recently taken from the postman to the message she penned; and then toward the door and the cradle.

Myrtis Blandon had been counted among the handsomest of the girls in her home town in Florida. Fair, clear-skinned and lithe, she had led in her set for merriment and good nature. But a few years of privation had brought changes in her. Now her big gray eyes were red with weeping. Her mass of bright hair was tucked closely under a hat of two or three sea-



sons past. Her clothes were all of a kind that suggested passing plenty.

As the baby stirred and cried the mother spoke some soothing word, and then—as though fearing that she was wasting precious time—she went and picked up the babe.

“Yes; darling. Soon we will be going to grandpa, and maybe out troubles will be over.” The baby, understanding only her presence, slept again, and with a furtive glance at the door the woman returned to the table. A single page was written and tucked under the edge of the kerosene lamp which furnished the light in the room. The shade was down at the only window, and raising it an instant could be seen the street lights and reflections from other buildings. Mrs. Ernest Robson stepped into the bedroom, adjoining, and returned at once with a handbag; glanced inside and adding her handkerchief to its contents, took little Myrtis from the cradle, turned down the lamp and started for the door.

Before the door was reached, however, the handle turned. A man with a violin case and bundle of music entered.

In the dimly lighted room the man paused a moment to understand the situation. Then

quickly placing the violin and music on a chair he came forward.

“Myrtis!” he said. “Not going out; at eight o’clock—and with little Myrtis—and the bag?”

The woman, silent another instant, and then, through half checked sobs replies: “Yes.” Controlling her voice she speaks; gently, but firmly. “Ernest; I have had another letter from my father. He begs me to come home. He has found out where we are—and our poverty, and while not yet ready to forgive you; he wants me to come back. Me and the baby. I wouldn’t go—without you; except for Myrtis. But things seem so hopeless, and with the winter coming on and baby half sick—I—I thought it was best.”

“But you were going without even saying good bye!”

“I thought it would be easier, dear.”

“And not even to kiss our darling?”

“Ernest; I shall try so hard to gain father’s forgiveness and then he will help you—it surely is for the best, dear. Try to see it that way,” Myrtis is pleading.

But the man has hardened and is bitter when thinking of the opposition of his father-in-law, before and after his marriage with Myrtis. He

turns away as if to leave them—then falters and comes back.

“Perhaps I could get some publisher to print my songs—even yet,” he urges, as though craving any delay. “There is talk of a new picture house in Wimbleton and possibly I could get a place to play.”

“It must be different ways, dear,” persisted the woman; “at least for awhile. Let baby and me go on—there’s a train for Tampa at nine. You can say we are on a visit—unless you want to go somewhere else to try for a better start—and even though father says I must not communicate with you, he will change—I’m sure.”

“All right; dear,” says the man, after a silence that has seemed interminable. Upon his handsome face passed the two mad, reckless years since he slipped away with Myrtis and they were married at the home of a country parson; Robson a romantic musician, with talent and ambition, but having had little opportunity and no real “luck”. He had brought his bride to Wimbleton, not because it was a flourishing place with much to offer. Rather because it seemed ideal for a honeymoon; and here they had loved and almost starved. Several times her father had written

and offered Myrtis a home—but never mentioned the man who had taken his girl away.

“All right;” he repeats. “I know I am a flat failure. Talent does not count; nor hard work. I’m just a miserable failure and should be ashamed to stand between you and a home. \* \* \* \* \* Good-bye dear. God bless you—and keep you—always.” He turns as the woman goes slowly to the door, opens and closes it after her. In a manner that is pitiful in its attempt at gaiety he throws a kiss to little Myrtis.

The door closed, Ernest Robson goes to the table—picks up the letter; but does not open it. His head goes down and while the lamp burns, dimly, he bows to the inevitable.

\* \* \* \* \*

### III

Reverie (Tempo primo —ppp)

Twilight has given place to moonlight among the hills and vales of the Old North State. In Salisbury the harvest moon is shining full upon the stone church, and, directly through the chancel window, falls upon a picture of peace and solitude. Through the aisles the scattered moon-



beams play and climb, and reaching clear to the open door they find and welcome a vision fair. Standing at the church door is a maiden all in white, and yet the glow of her cheeks and the gold of her hair and the blue of her eyes are all so exquisitely blended as to make her seem unreal. A summer afternoon hat, dangling from ribbons on her round, white arm, suggests that her wanderings were begun before the nightfall. But she is not afraid of the dark—nor is there anything she fears. Not even an empty church with all that it could suggest. She pauses for a moment at the door, and then slips quietly in, not irreverently, but as though impressed with the beauty of the scene—for moonlight transforms angles and silvers every curve.

Impelled by some unknown influence, the girl moves toward the chancel and is half way up the main aisle before she discovers the organist, who has stirred and turned—scarce realizing that he has dreamed over again the scene of years gone by.

But Ernest Robson is now looking and wondering—the girl moves forward; but the years turn back; yes, it must be: there was but one such face and figure \* \* \* \* \*



“Myrtis,” he calls. “Myrtis—my darling!”

The girl pauses; startled—but not afraid.

The old organist is fully awake now. He rises and extends a hand. “Forgive me,” he pleads, “and come nearer.”

Hesitating, then confident, the girl approaches and extends a hand. The moonlight is so broad that the study of the two—youth and age—is plain as ever the daylight could afford. They are looking at each other and he explains that he had dozed off—after a warm afternoon of rehearsals, and had been living in memory the days gone by.

“But you called me Myrtis,” said the girl. “That is my name. I’m here from Tampa, to be at Marjorie’s wedding. Marjorie was my roommate at Rollins. And I was running away for a little walk about and thought I would look in at the church. Maybe I’d better go now; they may be wondering where I am.”

“Just a minute, dear,” said the organist. His face had once more assumed a far-away look. It seemed almost as though a hand was reaching out to him from the past. “You say your name is Myrtis?”

“Yes, sir,” wonderingly.

“And you are just eighteen and your mother—is she—

“Yes, sir; mother’s well and we live in Tampa—but why do you ask me these things—and why do you look at me so?” The girl is agitated, yet does not seek to release the hand which has been held.

“Myrtis—cannot you guess? Has your mother never told you of the father you have never seen?”

“Yes; yes. Often we talk of him—and have tried for so many years to find out about him—but never could.”

“And now, Myrtis; can’t you guess—don’t you know—”

More beautiful even than the moonlight is the awakening light on her face as Myrtis, folding herself into the arms of the old organist, cries simply:

“Daddy!”

\* \* \* \* \*

And Abe, coming in to light up for evening service and discovering the two in close embrace, coughs interestedly.

“Abe,” says the organist, as he starts down the

aisle, towards the door, "I have found my own."

And in reverent tones the negro replies:

"Bress de good Lawd! Bress de Lawd!"

## TRAILING ARBUTUS

Harvey Wideman, department clerk at Washington, off on a two weeks' leave of absence, was sitting in a Pullman car, idly turning the pages of Munsey's, when, noting the slowing-down of the train, he gave attention to the call of the trainman. "Branchville!" shouted the man. "Change cars for Augusta! Twenty minutes for dinner!" He had already dined and knew that the car would go through, but curiosity impelled him to get out and look over the place. From his gray coat pocket he brought a briar, and with its comforting clouds counteracting the smell of oil and grease and miscellaneous freight that is always on a country depot platform, he made a trip about. There wasn't much to see and, the smoke finished, he was turning back, when the noise of an approaching train made him hesitate. It was the regular express from Charleston, and in a minute the platform was animated with moving trucks and passengers changing for Columbia and Augusta.

Harvey stood near the Olympia, which had brought him so far on his Southern trip, and

found it a duty and a pleasure to respond to the inquiry of a young lady who wished to know of the car for Aiken. Never diffident or shy, Harvey offered a hand as she mounted the steps—for the conductor had been lured into the restaurant by a huge negro ringing a huge dinner bell. He received just a tiny smile and a soft murmured “Thank you” for his pains.

Ten minutes later the train for Augusta picked up the Olympia and was off to the westward. Harvey, returning to his seat, scanned the car for new arrivals and noted the old lady whose glasses fell at regular intervals as she dozed; the couple with the tiny baby that demanded minute attention; the other couple that had forgotten the world, and held hands just as though the train might be everlastingly running through tunnels—instead of rushing through miles and miles of pine forests, unbroken save for an occasional muddy stream or a sandy road that seemed to come from nowhere and to be intent on getting back by a circuitous route. Of course there were some golf-bag-encumbered tourists and a few drummers—but the Washington department clerk was searching for a new passenger and, when found, let his gaze rest there.



At a slight angle, as she was seated across the aisle, two sections ahead, he had the opportunity and privilege to study her, without apparent impertinence, and the subject seemed to grow more interesting at each point. She was tall and slender, with just a suggestion of pallor in her cheeks; her eyes, like two big patches of smut, appeared under dark pencilled eyebrows and soft, black hair. Harvey estimated her age at nineteen, her parentage Southern with maybe foreign ancestors, probably French, and her position and intentions that of a Charleston girl on her way to visit relatives. Her costume suggested mourning, although not necessarily recent bereavement, and here the inspection ceased—for the young lady was struggling with a window, and it was a chance to get acquainted, perhaps.

“Please let me help you,” he said, arriving at her section as she was about to resign herself to existing conditions. Outside the spring sunshine and the woods were interesting, and the car, with steam on since leaving Washington, was very close.

Again there was that gentle “Thank you,” and the black eyes dropped to a book in her lap.

Taking as long as he possibly could, Harvey,

now very near, followed up his study, but added little to the first picture. He ventured a remark about the weather, and as the long lashes lifted, tried to read the depths of the eyes below but there was only a smile of assent, which practically bade him go back to his seat.

Pretending to read, Harvey tried to explain away an illusion. Something was calling into his ear, loud and long, and the cry was, "Just you two!" "Nonsense," he said to himself: "we two, indeed! I'll never see her again, nor think of her. Guess this would be a good time to write to Allene—wonder if she's grown any since I saw her three years ago? I'll have to send a note from the hotel before I go out to the Sibleys'—they'll be surprised, sure enough, to see me, although I told them I might drop in any time." A pad from his suitcase is brought out and then returned.

No use trying to deceive himself. Harvey was not in the mood for writing, and with the magazine again in his hand, he let his eyes wander up the aisle and across to the slender, graceful girl, and his thoughts went building castles, with slim princesses presiding. "Just you two!"

kept buzzing through the pictures and refused to be silenced.

More pines and more roads and some little villages were passing outside, and the train sped on as the dusk closed down. The lights were on when the train reached the famous little winter resort, Aiken. Harvey was off with the first and, standing near the step, managed to get his hand above the conductor's and rejoiced when a little gloved paw rested in his a second as the owner descended.

"Can I call a cab for you, or see if there's someone to meet you?" asked Harvey, regardless of the fact that his train would linger but a minute.

"Thank you," she said, "but I will manage that," and the smile showed faintly once more.

"And mayn't I know who you are?" Harvey continued—with all his best powers in the plea, "and won't you let me introduce myself?" offering a card.

"Not now," she said, taking his card, however, and turning away as the train began to move.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Easy now, mister," a voice near Harvey cautions as he tries to put his hand to his head. His eyes open wonderingly, for the arm that he had

tried to raise is stiff and hurts abominably. What is the meaning of it all? Is he not on the train, bound for Augusta? and what can be the matter with his head? Somebody, with a woman's touch, is placing something cooling on his forehead and again a man's voice is heard:

"Guess he's coming 'round all right, Hulda; but we'll hafter be keerful of 'im fer a day er two maybe. I'll try ter git ter town termorrer and fetch a doctor—" and here Harvey lost the thread and only felt a sense of rest, and the pain seemed easing.

And then, in the morning, for it was but a short twelve hours since he had said adieu to the unknown at Aiken, Harvey Wideman, sore and bruised, heard that he had fallen from the observation platform of the New York special when nearing the water tank, three miles west of the station. Aiken, as many well know, is several hundred feet higher than Augusta, and the grade on the Southern is especially heavy when nearing the town. A few miles below there for a distance of half a mile or more the road runs on an embankment a hundred feet high, and quite near this is the water tank. As his head cleared Harvey remembered going out



on the platform as the train left 'Aiken. Filling his pipe, he was watching the lights of the town and wondering why he could not put that pretty stranger out of his mind.

The first part of the way was through a deep cut, with bridges overhead, and then the train seemed to leap into air and was thundering along, higher than the swaying pines that he could see in the bright starlight. The sight made him a little dizzy, and he turned to go in, when the car gave a lurch.

"I saw ye fall," said Johnson, the pump tender, "and went out ter where ye was right away. 'Twarn't no use to try an' stop that train, and nothin' else passed since that would have helped ye—and so here yer is."

The kindly services of Johnson and his wife had been sufficient; for the soft earth that composed the embankment had caught Harvey and, although stunning him, allowed no broken bones and delivered him, after mild treatment, almost as well as ever.

"Queer thing about this tumble," said Harvey to himself. "Does it mean that I should change my plans?" and much to the surprise of the





pump tender, his involuntary visitor proposed that he be allowed to stay in the little house in the woods for a week or more.

"I was bound for Augusta," the young man said, "but was not especially needed there. My baggage will be held and my loss off the train may be looked into. I'll just disappear for a few days. I can pay you for your trouble, and you can get some things for me when you go to town."

\* \* \* \* \*

Johnson made some rather unusual purchases when in Aiken a couple of days later. Harvey had written what he desired and had given him the money, and the storekeepers were moved to remark, "gittin' ter be a dude in yer old age, eh, Johnson?" which passed as a joke for the crowd.

In the meantime Harvey was getting real enjoyment out of long tramps through the pines. Johnson had brought an Augusta paper home which told of the disappearance of a passenger, whose baggage, marked H. W., was held by the railroad company. The Washington folks would not expect to hear from him right away, and the friends in Augusta were not expecting him. Each day he ranged nearer to Aiken—yet he forced himself to keep out of the town itself.

He hated to go away without seeing the unknown, and yet feared that his presence in Aiken might be misconstrued.

But the time was passing, and the sixth day after his unceremonious arrival at the pump station Harvey decided that this would be his farewell to the Aiken woods. Starting out early, he walked for miles, leaving the town a little to the east, and passing to a range of low hills, he made himself comfortable for a smoke, reclining upon the pine straw that carpeted the ground under the trees. Johnson's dog, Patch, had taken a fancy to him upon his arrival and accompanied the lost man each day. He was watching the yellow and white friend as he smoked, thinking how easy it had been to establish an understanding with the four-footer, and how hard to get acquainted with other kinds of living things.

Patch, dog fashion, never satisfied with going the distance, was making expeditions far and wide, and in the midst of Harvey's day dreams once more there was an interruption—it was Patch barking wildly.

Looking about for the cause, Harvey saw two figures approaching, stooping occasionally to

gather the little pink and white blossoms that grew under the ledges of loose rock and around the roots of trees. Trailing arbutus, dainty and fragrant, was there for those who would search and find. Nearer, they came now, and Harvey, stilling the dog's protests, met the eyes of the unknown.

A moment of restraint, and then merry laughter, begun by the girl, taken up by Harvey; although the child seemed rather puzzled.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Wideman," she said, extending her hand. Then to the child: "This is a friend I knew before I came to your house, Inez." Again addressing Harvey; she told of her surprise in finding him on the arbutus hills.

"That your dog?" asked Inez of Harvey. "And mayn't we have a run?" turning to the unknown.

Harvey sees her hesitate, and adds his best argument. In a moment the child and the collie are slipping, sliding down the pine needle-covered hill, and the two, silent and grave, stand together, looking, not at each other, but apparently through and beyond.

"You will tell me who you are, now?" he said, "and let me come to Aiken to see you?"

"No," she said. "Not yet—some time, maybe.

How is it that you are here? I saw you board the train that night—and you are not at the Park in the Pines. They always print the list.”

This was an admission of interest and all that was needed to start Harvey on his story. They were sitting on the pine straw, under a great tree, but she rose and turned away when he told her why he had not been to Aiken.

“I shall go on tomorrow,” he said, “and be in Washington within ten days, and then work and forgetfulness. I had thought that I was storm-proof, through many experiences, and now I am absolutely morbid because I have seen a pair of midnight eyes that haunt me.”

The pale cheeks flush under this and, calling for Inez to return, the girl offers her hand, saying:

“I’m surely sorry if I have given you any cause to worry, and I wish you wouldn’t. I don’t want to tell you who I am, or anything about myself—although of course you could find out, if you were mean enough to do it. Possibly we may meet again—I really hope so, in a conventional manner; and then, perhaps, you will like me better for having been a little backward in meeting your rather unwarranted advances.”



There was nothing hard or unpleasant in the way this was delivered, and Harvey cudgelled his wits for an apt reply.

Inez coming up, flushed and happy after her run, saw the man and her companion again touch hands, and part. She was not quick enough, however, to notice that the small hand held a spray of arbutus at first, and that it disappeared when the hand was released.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was later in the season, two years afterwards, that Harvey Wideman applied for leave of absence. Friends having a beautiful cottage on the Jersey shore had invited him to spend a week or ten days with them, and the remainder of the time would be taken up with doing the theatres in New York. Things had gone fairly well with him, lately, in some ways. A promotion and a raise of salary, good health, and many good friends had given him no cause for general complaint. But he still remembered the tumble from the train near Aiken, and the beautiful girl who would not tell him anything but "wait."

Now at the shore he spent the days and nights just as the regular Jerseyites spent them, and



rejoiced in the fullness of health and the spirit of recreation.

The day before he was leaving was Sunday, and with Mr. and Mrs. Benson and their little girl, Harvey was booked for an automobile ride out the Remsen road, then along Ocean avenue, to Sea Girt. All went well, and the day was passing delightfully when, in the early afternoon, they stopped at the bandstand at Asbury Park and, with a multitude, sat silent and appreciative under the spell of Arthor Pryor's art. The famous bandmaster was playing that exquisite ballad, "O, Dry Those Tears," as a trombone solo.

Harvey, always fond of music, was lost in the melody and scarcely noticed that a big red car had come up alongside until the land breeze brought him a sweet odor. Puzzling, then in an instant recalling the fragrance of the trailing arbutus, he glanced across, and in a second was nodding to—"the unknown."

"How do you do!" called Mrs. Brunson to the people in the red car, as the applause following the solo subsided and Pryor led his famous musicians off into a lively two-step. "When did you come to the shore, Mrs. Williams?"

The cars are close together, but Mr. Benson is getting out and Harvey follows to be introduced to Mrs. Williams and "her cousin, Miss Cecile Simons, from Charleston."

"We were going to the Coleman House for dinner," says Mr. Benson "and would be delighted to have you go with us—just informal, you know. Mr. Wideman goes South tomorrow."

And then, as all informal things are rather nice, except that they are sometimes inconvenient, the dinner party was greatly enjoyed.

"Where did you get that arbutus perfume?" asked Harvey, as they sat on the Coleman House piazza two hours later, having already found out that Cecile was also going South on the morrow.

"Do you like it?"

"Like it? Why, I adore it—it means you, you know!"





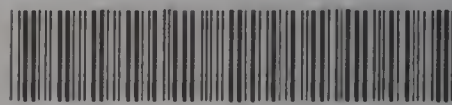






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